

GLIMPSE

Stick to Your Knitting

Fr. Larry Gillick, S.J.

There are many warnings and well-justified, about "texting" and even hand-held cell-phone use while driving. Having two eyes and only two hands is definitely a distracting limitation. Multi-tasking usually is a multi-masking of our fears of being insufficient.

There is a Latin phrase we Jesuits learned very early in formation. "Age quad agis" which means, "Do what you are doing". (Age is actually pronounced, ah-gay and agis, ah-gis, hard G.) It is the old way of reminding us to "Stick to your knitting." It relies on our hands, head and spirits being united. This was a hard lesson for me and maybe I'm still learning.

I worked as a janitor my first couple of years in the Society and my first "task" each morning was to visit each of the twenty-seven "castles" aka bathrooms and collect used paper hand towels. I had a quite large canvas bag thrown over my shoulder and did my little pilgrimage doing what I was doing.

One morning I was diligently doing in the infirmary. One of the rooms had been made into a little chapel, so I paused outside the door, knelt down for a little visit. I thought myself quite the little pious Jesuit, stopping my "doing" to pray before the Blessed Sacrament inside the room. I stood up and was about to move on with my "doing" when the Brother Infirmarian called to me to come into his office. He asked me if I had made my morning meditation and gone to mass. I humbly affirmed that I did. He then asked me why I stopped the work, the "doing" to pray. That was quite a shock, why wouldn't I, I wondered.

He took my silent response as a sign of confusion, which it was. "Your prayer, your participating in the Eucharist is prayer which prepares you to pray with your "doing", and you have not learned yet, that there are various forms of prayer and your work is one of them." I was missioned to pick up damp paper which didn't seem much like prayer to me. My mind and heart were raised to getting my work

done and the only fault was that I wouldn't have done my work fast enough. Ah so much to learn!

The big insight, or little glimpse, is that prayer is not always thinking about God and then separating off from prayer by some kind of "doing". Do spouses love each other only when they think of the other? Changing diapers might move the one spouse to think of the other sometimes in thoughts less loving. The washing and changing are unthinking-ways of loving. Prayer is a "doing" which is inseparable from other "doings" which extend prayer-time into time. We do prayer, or receive prayer so that we can pray with our "doing".

I have been writing this without kneeling down or even saying little words or even thinking of God, but I have been doing what I am doing and God gave me the gifts to do both within the one "doing".

No texting while driving, but you can text while doing if texting is what you are doing. We do not pray then as the holy thing and then go off and do something we consider less holy. I am going off now to do something having nothing to do with God or prayer, except it all is and always.

It is only a glimpse enjoy the praising by your doing.